

Police v. 10.

THE HEADS OF A

P L A N

FOR THE

RAISING THE MONEY

FOR

MAINTAINING PAUPERS

BY A NEW METHOD.

In which the DEFICIENCIES of the OLD SYSTEM are
pointed out, and the AUTHOR hopes made good.

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INTRODUCTION.

*THE rapid * and almost incredible increase of the tax levied for the maintenance of the poor, and the inefficacy of those laws intended for their relief; together with the great number, and intolerable insolence of the beggars, having for several years employed the wisdom of many well-designing members of parliament †, though without having hitherto produced any alteration in the general system, that promises success. I hope it will not be thought presumption in me, as an individual, to propose a plan, which I cannot help flattering myself may prove useful to the publick, and which, if not thought*

* The first act for assembling the poor in work-houses was passed in the 9th of George I. or in 1723, at which time there was no established relief for the poor, as at present.

† Mr. Gilbert, &c.

proper

proper to be adopted in all its parts, may nevertheless furnish hints, which in the hands of some one of more abilities, and possessed of more extensive information and experience, may tend to remove this growing and very alarming evil.*

* The proof of this being a growing and very alarming evil is, that in the space of sixty years from the commencement of the present laws, they have risen to such an enormous amount as to exceed the land tax at four shillings in the pound, the annual produce of which is two millions,

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P L A N
FOR RAISING
THE MONEY FOR MAINTAINING
THE
POOR OF ENGLAND.

I SHALL in the first place without further apology as the most proper introduction to my present plan, endeavour to shew where the present laws appear to me to be defective and ill-judged, in many instances tending rather to increase than diminish, the evil so universally complained of.

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In the next place I shall, in as few words as the subject will admit, give the outlines of the plan I propose, not entering into the detail, which if the heads are not approved of, would only be wasting my time and the readers patience; and, if it should, can easily and readily be added.

And finally, from a comparative view of the poor laws at present in force and their inconveniences, with the advantages I hope to make appear will arise, both to individuals and the public, from those I shall suggest, I will draw some arguments in favor of the latter, which, if not satisfactory, will I hope induce a more able pen to give us one that may answer better; as I am well convinced the laws now existing have their foundation in error, and ought therefore to be repealed entirely to make way for a new system.

First,

First then I shall take leave to observe, that by the frequent and numerous additions, alterations, and amendments made of late years in the poor laws, to rectify partial abuses, in which their operation with the general comprehensive plan has not been sufficiently attended to, this body of law is become both complex, and voluminous, and in many instances if not entirely contradictory, absolutely irreconcilable ; this makes so much knowledge of the law necessary to the magistrate, that it deters plain, upright, conscientious men from being in the commission of the peace, and where this inconvenience is remedied by the appointment of those who are neither upright, or conscientious, but who possessing the quibbling knowledge of low attorneys, accept this post of honor and trouble, not for the benefit of society but for a legal livelihood, they are enabled

successfully to harrafs, opprefs, and perplex all parties to their own emolument*.

The poor laws at present in force oblige the honest, industrious, and laborious part of the community, many of whom are frequently under great difficulties themselves, to support the idle, profligate, clamorous pauper; for which injustice, the return they meet with, if any of them from unavoidable misfortunes are reduced to indigence is, the being crammed into the com-

* To illustrate this, enquiry need only be made into the mode of conducting business at many of the offices belonging to those men properly termed *trading* justices, in Middlesex; the very epithet which these men have acquired is not only a disgrace to the Lord Lieutenant, but to the nation: and that the title of trading justices is a just one, the author is acquainted with anecdotes sufficient to prove unquestionably. But the immense sums of parish money annually spent in law, by their means, is sufficient.

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mon work-house without distinction, or pity, and forced to mix with the dregs of the people. Thus the idle and clamorous extort an unmerited support, while too frequently those burthened with large families *, or oppressed with temporary sickness, are for the want of a trifling, but well-timed, and in the end economical relief, reduced from that comfortable estate peculiar to industry and a free government, (such as a cottage of their own, decent clothes, a little furniture or stock) to decay and beggary, it being almost a universal maxim with parish officers †, who are the

* This class of mankind ought to have the greatest attention paid to them compatible with justice in the formation of all poor laws, as they are the most beneficial to the kingdom, by the increase of population, which is real wealth.

† Hence arises a most disgraceful proverb to our country, "He has no more humanity than a parish officer."

administrators of the law as it now stands, to grant no relief until the object is on the point of starving ; nor give admission into the work-house in sickness, while any effects remain in the pauper's possession ; the natural consequence of this conduct is a depression of the spirits of the poor, habitual disregard of shame, and at length, drunkenness and despair.

Another very evident error in the present arbitrary set of poor laws, is the placing the execution of them in a great measure, in the hands of persons the most unqualified and improper. Vestries (select ones, of which there are very few excepted) are for the most part composed of the lowest and most illiterate tradesmen, farmers, and mechanics ; most of these contribute little to the rates, therefore are careless and indifferent as to their amount. They meet and undertake the business of
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the parish either from a love of power and authority, for the purpose of assisting each other as tradesmen at the expence of the parish, or for the partaking of the many feasts and dinners they illegally order and pay for out of the common fund *.

It cannot be expected that noblemen, gentlemen, and substantial tradesmen, or farmers, who have none of these views,

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and

* I am willing to allow much for the inconceivable supineness of the gentlemen of this country, which has been one great cause of the inefficacy of the present laws; this therefore appearing to be in some measure constitutional, should be counteracted by passing laws as simple as possible; at the same time making the execution of them as pleasant, and liable to as few difficulties as the case will admit.

I have many instances in my mind, of the ill government of the poor, and scandalous misapplication of parish money, as well as of indecent and intentional
partiality

and abhor such practices, will attend open vestries, where they are certain of being always opposed, and not unfrequently insulted, by those who make it their interest to take the management of parish affairs out of the hands of the creditable part of the people, and who are enabled by their numbers always to overrule any thing proposed by their betters.

In distant counties where low farmers alone constitute the vestry, it is well known how often the humanity of the neighbouring magistrate is obliged to interfere,

partiality in the raising of it; but it being my wish to make friends rather than enemies, I shall not enumerate them to the public, but satisfy myself with referring the advantage and use of select vestries, in preference to open ones, to the clearest of all possible tests, the good government and small expence of the one, compared with those parishes governed by the other.

terfere, or the poor would be most scandalously neglected.

It appears to me a very ill-judged measure the crowding under one common roof paupers of every denomination, decayed housekeepers, reduced by unavoidable misfortunes from a state of ease, if not of affluence, with the vulgar, illiterate, and profane ; the aged and infirm, with infants and noisy children ; the healthy with the distempered ; the men and boys with the women and girls. It is surely dangerous to health, destructive of morals, and promotes, (let the attention and regulations of the managers be as great as possible) by the numbers thus brought together, lewdness, idleness and vice.

The present mode of maintaining such children as fall to the care of the parish is
highly

highly improper, and destructive of numbers of this helpless part of the community, they are either confined with great numbers of others as described above, in a work-house, or placed out to nurse at so small a price as to preclude all chance of care or tenderness, in the rearing them*.

* The usual price is half a crown a week, some give three shillings, a very few three and six-pence; I have been informed there are parishes who give but two shillings; if any such there be, I conclude they also give the nurse a premium on the death of the child. But the highest price here mentioned, which I know is only given by a few parishes in London, which are governed by select vestries, is too little. The diabolical effect of the inferior prices, may easily be ascertained by a comparison of the number of orphan or bastard children born in each parish, with the number that annually die; such an investigation would I have reason to think, open the eyes of the public.

The

The severity* of the punishment required to be inflicted by the poor laws is another very great error; the humanity of the magistrate will frequently occasion his rather passing over an offence entirely, than direct a very severe chastisement for a small offence, and by this means the law becomes absolutely null and void.

The general modes of punishment directed for the offending pauper, are in my opinion both extremely arbitrary†, unjust, and cruel; they are corporal, or commitment

* Persons receiving alms and refusing to be badged, may be committed to Bridewell by one justice for twenty-one days, there to be flogged and kept to hard labor.

† As I do not like to make assertions without proof, I will give the reader a few instances out of numbers, which I think will be sufficient to prove the word arbitrary well applied.

By

ment to Bridewell to hard labor ; the first of these tend only to debase the human mind, and harden it in vice, by subduing all shame, and must always be unjust, because unequal ; the same number of stripes are inflicted for the same offence, but the power and ability of the party to bear

By an act of 13th and 14th, of Charles II. any person being well settled in work, and industrious to his own profit and the content of his master, who wishes to keep him if it is not in the parish to which he belongs and he has not a certificate, he is liable against his employer's consent, to be returned by force to his parish where possibly he cannot procure work, and if he refuses to stay there and starve, one justice may commit him to Bridewell, &c. &c.

By 17th of George the Second any person assessed to the poor and not paying, although from objections as to the justness of the quantum, his goods are liable to be seized by order of one magistrate, even although they be in another county. He has an appeal it is true, but from the costs if he be poor, as I suppose in this case, the remedy is worse than the disease,

them,

them, is neither considered nor can possibly be known until tried, when it is it will be experienced, that one man will faint under the same number of lashes another will laugh at; its cruelty consists in the suffering private floggings without the attendance of a magistrate, or such person as can be confided in.

For the second mode of punishing by commitment to Bridewell, had it been devised by the devil himself it could scarcely have been more efficacious in the propagation of every species of determined villainy: here, by the numbers of miscreant vagabonds collected together, every distinct mode of fraud and plunder, practised by each, is communicated to the whole, and there is little doubt if a man be committed for the most trifling offence, but that when he comes out, he is qualified as a highwayman

wayman or housebreaker *. Here they form gangs, and lay plans for disturbing the peace of the public when again at large, the convenience of several trades uniting, becomes well understood and practised, as is daily proved by their frequent and ready entrance where they wish, in despite of all opposition : and even particular houses are fixed on for plunder, and robbed months after, in consequence of plans laid in prison and on board of the hulks. Most of these facts, and many others infinitely too numerous to mention here,

• Is it possible to devise any thing more cruel, than to commit a man for quitting his parish for more constant, or more profitable work, to the same place which is the receptacle for villains of every denomination : and the real motive for this (not supposing a worse) for fear the man should gain a settlement ; thus population is become a curse, and the laws make it the interest of a man of fortune and a magistrate to create a desert round him for fear human inhabitants should become chargeable.

are

are well known and can be attested by the attentive and vigilant magistrates of Bow-Street.

It gives me great concern to observe, that the object of the poor laws in their present state seems to be the inflicting punishment, rather than checking the first commission of crimes, and an endeavor when an object has offended to reclaim him. If the latter had been the wish of those who originally passed these laws, they would have obliged all parishes to find honest employ at a fair price for the lower class of people, instead of compelling them to maintain such in idleness and impudence. At present there is a perpetual contest between the master and the laborer, to the immediate and certain loss of both; in the summer when work is plenty and must be executed out of hand, the laborer takes an undue advantage of his master,

master, and extorts from his necessity greatly too large a price for the work he has to do ; the consequence is obvious, the money thus improperly gained induces the laborer to go to the ale-house, where he not only spends what he thinks he is entitled to by his exaction, but the whole money he has earned while his family at home are in want of bread ; and this occasions the master's work to stand still frequently two or three days in a week, while his servant is acquiring bad habits, and wasting his health and strength in drunkenness and debauchery ; at length the winter* arrives, then the master thinks it his turn either by doing without the

* No part of the extra wages thus obtained is ever laid by for the winter, to pay house-rent, buy clothes, &c. I believe it to be a just observation that few men (those of the lower sort more especially) who suddenly or unexpectedly obtain more money than usual, are in the end benefited thereby.

same number of servants, and by that means leaving them to starve in idleness, or by obliging them to work under the usual price, to make good the money he looks upon as forced from him when he could not help himself. Thus idleness and poor rates encrease *; an immense amount of annual labor is lost to the public, and vice and immorality of every sort takes firm root. Besides these evils, this perpetual contention between the two orders of master and servant, weakens if it does not absolutely destroy on the one side, pity and compassion, and on the other teaches insolence, disrespect and carelessness for their master's interest, add to

* I apprehend if it be enquired into it will be found, that idleness, indolence, debauchery, and immorality, have encreased nearly in exact proportion with the poor rates. Indeed, no greater proof need be given than the astonishing number of public houses, supported intirely by the poor.

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this that the poor well know, if they be ever * so idle their wives and families must be maintained, and when once they have received relief which they are not intitled to by industry, it is very seldom they are afterward of any value to society.

The greatest and most intolerable evil still remains, which although it has no connection with the laws, said to be enacted for the maintainence and *better government* of the poor, yet co-operates so powerfully with them in the extirpation of every moral virtue, from that useful and necessary

* By acts passed in the 5th and 43d of Elizabeth wholesome provisions are made to empower one or two justices to compel persons under certain descriptions to go to service and work ; but the misfortune is they are left in the breast of the justice, to enforce or not as he likes ; the consequence is, all justices know, that if they were to enforce them they would be esteemed tyrants and hated accordingly, whereas if they were obliged to enforce them that would not be the case.

fary part of mankind, that I cannot help taking notice of it in this place.

It is the almost incredible number of ale-houses.

Many worthy magistrates who have wished to perform their duty, have attempted by various methods to reform these dens of wickedness, blasphemy, gaming and drunkenness, but almost all these good intentions have been defeated; they are so numerous that it is impossible to watch them all, and as from their number the difficulty of finding a livelihood is encreased, they are tempted to encourage every thing, and every person who will expend money in their houses*.

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* I apprehend the original intention of public-houses, to have been for the convenience and entertainment of travellers of all sorts and descriptions; consequently

I will venture to assert that no effectual reformation will ever take place; until the licenses of all those above such a number as are actually necessary for the accommodation of travellers in each town or village are suppressed, and those that are licensed to be situated in the most open and public part of the town; there are those who whenever this is proposed assert that the
 interest

two kinds of houses were necessary, a large and convenient inn or tavern, for the entertainment of the nobility and gentry; and a small house for the entertainment of the lower class: these may be increased in number according to the greatness of the thorough-fare, but were always intended to be in the high-street, or most public part of the town or village; these so situate are both necessary and useful, those of which I complain and to which two thirds of the licenses granted belong, stand in the most retired and private part of towns and villages; and frequently three or four in a village which is no thorough-fare, for the purpose of being concealed from the eye of justice, and that they may unobserved keep bad houses, harbor all sorts of wandering vagabonds, thieves, gypsies, poachers and drunkards.

interest of government and the revenue, is so materially interested in keeping up the number, that they cannot be lessened †. If it can be the national interest and considered as such by our rulers, for the sake of a revenue raised on malt and spirits,

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to

drunkards. Having named poachers, I cannot avoid saying a few words on the subject; many think the laws against them cruel, arbitrary, and oppressive; if they really are so, how much more severe are the poor laws? and I cannot but take notice of what must have fallen under every person's observation, that these people are ever the worst, most idle, and reprobate in a parish; indeed they cannot be otherwise, their employ is by night when all honest men are at rest, and in the day they hide and skulk in the houses above described, where they spend whatever they get, and their families are constantly upon the parish.

† If motives of general good are not deemed sufficient ground for administration to give the absolute government of alehouses, in point of number as well as regulation, into the hands of magistrates, who from their residence on the spot must be the best and properest judges of all matters relating to them, an equivalent may be given

to poison the health and strength, and to corrupt the morals of half the mass of the people, my labor is indeed thrown away, and I much fear a period not far distant will prove we are become no longer worthy to be governed by our present happy constitution. It may be said, that good and sufficient laws are in being to controul and govern these houses, if enforced; to this I answer, that to rectify abuse, information must be given to the magistrate that it exists, and this information must depend on the very persons who frequent the houses, and are themselves at one time or another the offenders; the absurdity of trusting reformation in such hands is too clear to need a comment; and indeed the character of an informer is known to be such, as to make almost all those laws that depend

given to the revenue instead of any supposed loss by the suppression of many of them: such as a double tax on the licenses of those that remain, &c. &c.

for

for their execution on information null and void: besides, can any thing be more unjust, than to countenance alehouses by licence to draw together a number of people for the purpose of losing their reason by intoxication, and then to punish them for intemperate acts, that are the certain and usual consequence of that loss. Of late years another grievance has arisen to the poor from these houses, which is greatly increased by an act forbidding the selling beer in small quantities, without a licence, by this means a poor man is absolutely deprived of the comfort of good wholesome small beer with his meals, unless he can afford to brew a quantity, and purchase materials for that purpose; this being seldom or never the case, he is obliged to drink water; or is driven into these houses of entertainment, and when there must drink porter or spirits at a very dear rate, when he would frequently prefer small beer at

one fourth of the price. The brewers also who are now become owners of public houses, almost universally take care to increase this evil for their own benefit, by brewing such intolerable stuff for sale to the poor, when they chuse to let them have any, (which is not always,) that water is a preferable drink*. Thus the poor are in some measure forced by the government into bad company, to drink liquors they cannot afford and which is destructive of their health; while the lazy drone of a publican finds it his interest to drink half of what is called for, and seduce his guest on from mug to mug, until he becomes unfit for any other employ than to sit at his door as a bait to draw in other unwary neigh-

* I would have every publican obliged under the penalty of a fine and forfeiture of his license, always to keep for sale good wholesome small beer at a fair price, and would have the legislature take every possible method of suppressing the use of spirits.

neighbours. A volume might be filled with an enumeration of the evils derived from the foregoing sources, but these may suffice, as it is not my intention to give the detail of my plan, only to draw such an outline as may enable the publick to form an idea of the usefulness and practicability of it.

Having thus in as concise a manner as possible executed my first intention, in pointing out a few of the numberless deficiencies of the present poor laws, I shall proceed to lay my plan before the publick.

I would begin with dividing paupers into four classes.

First, decayed house-keepers reduced to poverty by misfortunes or unavoidable accidents; I have frequently been witness to the cruelty of obliging these to mix and associ-

associate with the lowest and most abandoned of the species.

Secondly, idiots and those disordered in mind ; these unhappy objects when associated in one poor house, very much shock and depress the spirits of those who are capable of reflection, and are themselves too often tormented by being the subjects for mirth and ridicule with those who are incapable of thought.

Thirdly, the bulk of the paupers who have been either laborers, mechanicks, manufacturers, house or other servants.

Fourthly, children of all ages and denominations ; these, by being mixed with adults, have their tender minds corrupted, by being eye and ear witnesses to the wicked and scandalous conversation and behaviour too frequent in these houses.

For

For the first class I would build on some waste or common in each county small tenements after the manner of alms houses, which should be furnished with a bed table and two chairs, and should contain two persons man and wife if married, if not two men, or two women; to each of these I would allot if the extent of ground would admit a garden, and a small weekly allowance, such as might encourage industry rather than support idleness. The punishment for idleness or misbehaviour, to be for the first offence a stoppage of the allowance, for the second the being sent to the common workhouse for life.

For the second and third classes, I would continue such poor or workhouse as may at present be in use, only keeping them absolutely and entirely distinct, furnishing those persons wanting for the care and attendance

tendance of the second, out of the third class. To these workhouses I would add a penitentiary house, fitted up with such a number of single cells as may be thought adapted to the size of the parish, which should serve not only as a place of punishment for the idle and profane paupers, but also as a common bridewell for others of the parish, who make themselves liable to imprisonment*; persons so confin'd to be kept entirely separate, without having the least connection or communication with any one but the Jailor who feeds them, and he should be directed not to answer if spoke to.

Every

* The effect of solitary confinement without the possibility of obtaining any liquor capable of intoxicating, I believe would be such, as to become much more efficacious in the reformation of the morals, even of the most abandoned, than the terrors of death, and it is surely much more humane.

Every possible method should be taken to make those confined in this house earn as much as possible, by employing them in such manner as shall be most profitable, if not prejudicial to health; all money so earned to be added to the fund for maintenance, &c.

All such laws rules or regulations, as may be thought by managers and directors conducive to the good government of the house, ought to be painted in large legible characters in some conspicuous part of the house, also the punishment they are liable to for each, where it can be fixed and determined, such punishment to be invariably inflicted; I would also have some small rewards rather in the nature of indulgencies than in money, appropriated for those who persist in a uniform course of good behaviour.

When

When parliament has determined upon, and passed such laws as they shall judge most conducive to the good government of the poor, which laws ought to be as concise and explicit as possible, I would have the execution of them entrusted to the most respectable part of the inhabitants as a select vestry, whether noblemen, gentlemen, clergy, substantial tradesmen, yeomen, or land-holders; as vacancies happen, to be filled up by ballot: the candidate's name to be affixed in some conspicuous part of the vestry room, at least two meetings previous to the election; and all such persons as are directly or indirectly concerned in providing any provision materials or otherwise for the use of the poor-house, to be absolutely disqualified for a vestryman; at least one or more of the members of such vestry, to be acting magistrates for the county; all proceedings of said vestry to be minuted by a clerk, and carefully kept as

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a record*. A distinct ward as is usual at present, should be appropriated to complainants, and a pest-house erected detached from the main building, for such as are afflicted with infectious distempers. It is well worthy serious consideration, whether it would not be a good method to have one general county hospital, centrally

* This is on a supposition that the poor of each parish is to be maintained in the parish to which they belong as at present. If they are collected together to a general county workhouse which is the plan I would advise, the house must be governed by a stated number of the most reputable inhabitants, deputed from each parish, provided always they are gentlemen. By collecting the poor of every parish to one general county workhouse, you might have your poor-house, penitentiary-house, hospital, and house of employ or industry, all together; this would be infinitely more convenient for medical assistance; the power of establishing different manufactories would be increased greater from the number to be employed under each head; the whole government would be in less compass, much cheaper, the attendance of magistrates in rotation less troublesome, and the whole system carried on with much greater ease.

situated,

situated, to be maintained by a county rate for the purpose of taking in all such as are diseased in the county; with an allowance to all gentlemen to send their servants thither on paying a certain annual subscription to the fund.

I would have all infants whatever that fall under the jurisdiction of the parish, be first invariably offered to the care of the mother to nurse (if of tolerable character) at the same allowance of other nurses; but if her situation makes it improper she should have the care of it, then to be placed out at such a price as will make it the indisputable interest of the nurse to be careful in the rearing it: no one nurse to take at any one time more than three children unless her own; if any of her own not more than one of another's. It remains for future consideration, whether it would be advantageous to collect all the
three

three first classes of paupers, to one common spot, from every parish in each county; many very strong and convincing arguments occur to me for it, doubtless there are some against it: although entering into the detail is no part of my present intention, I have as a note, mentioned some reasons in favour of a county workhouse which must appear evident to every one.

Having thus divided and classed paupers, I come to the more essential part of the business, the maintenance of them, which as my plan is absolutely new in all its parts, I shall endeavour to make as clear as possible. In the first place, I would by act of parliament, fix the wages of every species of house, or other servant, labourers, manufacturers, or handicrafts men; this would be neither more difficult or more arbitrary than the execution of the present poor laws,

laws, and has several precedents, the wages of weavers, taylor's, &c. being already so fixed. The following method of doing this among several others has occurred to me. Divide all labourers, handicraft mechanics, and manufacturers, into three classes, viz. prime workmen, middling ones, and ordinary ones; and divide servants in like manner; first, into upper ones, out of livery; second, butlers, coachmen, gardeners, and keepers; third, all others, as footmen, helpers, &c. &c. and then by a committee of the most respectable people of each trade, let the proper wages of each class be fixed in each county*.

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* The wages of servants to be fixed by parliament. This may be done with the strictest justice by one of the two following methods, the latter of which is the one I should prefer; either to fix the wages of all, labourers, manufacturers, and mechanics, by a standard of the price of wheat per bushel, encreasing the price of
of

This leading step taken, the advantages of which would be soon felt in trade ; I would oblige every master to take, and every servant to hire himself for one year certain ; to this I can see no possible objection, (it is customary now in many countries) as if the master misbehaves in any shameful manner to the servant by cruelty, or withholding legal wages, I trust in this free country, justice may always be obtained by the meanest ; if the servant offends, (for which I am sorry to say at present no punishment exists but dismissal) let him

of wages in due proportion to the increased price of bread ; or to fix absolutely the price of the labour of these people, and establish a publick granary in each county, which may be filled when wheat is at or under the fixed standard, to be re-delivered to the poor at that price when it exceeds : this will answer two other good purposes ; it will tend to prevent real and dangerous scarcity, and will be a magazine where, when corn is reasonable, the small or poor farmer, may deliver the crop, and receive ready money.

be liable, at the discretion of two justices, to be confined in the penitentiary house ; here he will be in no danger of becoming more corrupt by confinement alone, and bread and water or coarse victuals ; and when at the end of such confinement, the master will be in no danger from reinstating him in his place, as a repetition of faults will entitle him to such frequent confinement as I believe no man would wish to incur. Other punishments may also be inflicted as a degradation from higher to lower places, and let a register be kept at the penitentiary house, to which any gentleman may refer, and there see for what crime, and for how long the man was committed, and whether he behaved well during commitment * ; such registry of ill behaviour

* This with livery servants in particular, would have an admirable effect ; as the insolence to which they are

behaviour to be expunged upon good behaviour for a fixed term by petition.

Another advantage that would arise from the making those crimes of domestic servants short of felony, which are at present only punishable by dismissal, cognisable by magistrates is, that a chance of reformation will be given to these offending persons, which is next to impossible at present, as they now from loss of all character from bad, become worse, until they make their final exit at Tyburn*.

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are at present arrived, is such as to laugh at dismissal from their place, and even at refusal of character, as they write fictitious ones for one another, are supported when out of place, in their demand of extravagant demands by clubs, &c. &c.

* I would make every master liable to a fixed fine for hiring any servant, without a character from his last place, descriptive of his name and parish, and whether while in that place, he had made himself amenable to

I would then have every master obliged, either himself, or by his house steward or other head servant, to make stoppages from the wages of every domestic or other servant, journeymen, handicraft, manufacturer, or laborer, in the following proportions, which stoppages should be accounted for to the nearest magistrates, or at the quarter sessions upon oath; all overpluses of the same after payment of maintenance if any such remains to be placed out in the publick funds, in the name of the sheriff of the county for the time being, and the accounts thereof to be regularly kept signed and transferred to his successor in office, for the future use and purposes of the third class of paupers, under such laws and other regulations, as the wisdom of parliament may think proper—only observing that

to the law, by having bastards, or otherwise, which character should be filed, or entered in a book to be kept as a register.

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apprentices are meant to be excepted in all these regulations.

From every single man, either a journeyman, manufacturer, mechanick, laborer, house or other servant, I would stop one-fifth or four shillings in the pound of their wages.

From each married couple, having no children, from the mans wages three-twentieths, or three shillings in the pound.

From each married couple, having one child only, of the man's wages one-twentieth, or one shilling in the pound.

From every woman servant one-tenth, or two shillings in the pound, if single.

From every married woman, having no children, one-twentieth, or one shilling in the pound.

No stoppage to be made from any man and wife, widow or widower, who has actually living two children; or who has had three children born alive,

Nor any stoppage to be made from any woman's earnings if she has one child alive, or be a widow having had two born alive.

Nor any stoppage to be made from the wages or earnings of any male or female child living with the parents, under the age, if a boy of fourteen; if a girl, sixteen*.

For

* Stoppages of a similar nature ought to be made from the wages of sailors; also a poundage should be stopped on prize-money: what is to be done with soldiers, I profess myself at some loss to determine, as their pay will certainly allow of no stoppage; but some plan may be formed that may in some measure compensate the parish for the taking from them a useful hand, and frequently

For the maintenance of bastard children, I would oblige the father and mother to be subject, the father to a stoppage of eighteen pence per week, the mother to one of one shilling, the residue necessary to be made good out of the general fund; if the mother nurses it herself she should not contribute any otherwise to its support, but have from the father and the fund the full usual allowance†.

It

frequently burthening them with his large family; at any rate it is to be hoped the army establishment will be reduced as low as possible. Possibly it may be found a wise measure to adopt the Emperor's method, that of allowing such a number to be always absent on furlough for carrying on the business of husbandry during the summer and autumn months.

† By the method before proposed, of taking no servant without a character, containing a certificate of his parish, name, and whether liable to punishment for bastardy, all possibility of escape from justice would be avoided, as any one offering for service without giving an

It will also be highly necessary that in this place a proper provision should be made for common prostitutes, who are now become scandalously offensive to modest women, whom they insult in the grossest manner the moment the evening shuts in : for these unhappy wretches, who, miserable as they are, are necessary in every state, I would provide otherwise than with whips and Bridewell : in what manner I confess myself at some loss, but the money necessary I would provide for by a poll tax on all bachelors above the age of nineteen years, and on all widowers under such a certain time of life, as by themselves may be thought proper, allowing always three

an account of his last place and master, ought to be punishable in the penitentiary house. This will also be the best of all possible securities for the maintenance of bastards by the father, without ruining him by a commitment to Bridewell for want of bail, as he will find it impossible to conceal himself, or avoid paying his stoppage for its maintenance.

years

years to each widower to grieve for his former, and provide another wife, and this poll-tax should be levied on all those who do not contribute by stoppages to the former fund.....any overplus arising from this tax, to be appropriated at the end of every three years to the better maintenance of, and apprenticing out of bastard children.

Having thus fulfilled the two first parts of my design, I come to the third and last. From a comparative view of the present system of poor laws in force, with this plan, to endeavour at proving the advantage that will accrue to the public and individuals, from adopting the latter: to do this the more clearly and fairly, I shall take leave to compare them by the three following tests :

Religion,

Justice,

State Policy.

It

It does not appear to me that my plan will suffer on a comparison with our present laws, (the operation of which I have before described) by the test of religion, a diminution of the number, and consequently the much easier government and regulation of public houses—the rendering beginning offences of servants to masters, which are at present overlooked by the laws, but which always lead to the commission of greater crimes, cognizable by magistrates, and thus liable to be checked in the bud—the punishment of these crimes being in a way likely to diminish, rather than encrease criminality, which is not the case at present—the making a provision for prostitutes, and leaving modest women no longer liable to their insults—the obliging parishes rather to find work, than bridewells for paupers. These I consider as no small points gained toward a reformation in the morals of the people, and will I think be
more

more conducive to the good of society than any thing the present system can boast of religiously considered.

With regard to justice, I shall observe that it seems much more consonant to its true principles that a small proportion of every man's hire should be stopped for the purpose of maintaining him and his family in sickness and old age, than that the honest and industrious part of the community (who are often at their beginning much distressed to live themselves) should be obliged to contribute to raise a maintenance (which also too often proves an encouragement) to idleness and insolence.

With respect to state policy, the advantages of my plan appear to me so numerous and unequivocal, that no comparison can be drawn.

1st. The

1st. The great encouragement to population, both by a man's ceasing to contribute to the common stock when he has two children, and by the poll tax, as a man will naturally reflect in this case that he may as well have the pleasure of getting children legally himself, as maintain those of others.

2d. I believe it to be an indisputable maxim, that the true riches of a state consists in the number of its inhabitants, and the usefulness of their employ; for both of which this plan provides.

3dly. By obliging all servants to hire themselves for a year, and making them liable to punishment for misbehaviour instead of being dismissed their service, an inconceivable addition of labour is gained, as it has ever been computed that one-fifth of all servants are always out of place; these,

these while waiting for the places of others, form clubs, frequent alehouses, traduce the characters of families, and thus become the destruction of others who would behave well. I have ever considered unnecessary and supernumerary domestic servants as drones in the hive, consuming the produce of others labour and industry without contributing any thing thereto; therefore it is my opinion, that whatever contributes to lessen this great body of people who are daily making large strides to the becoming our masters, and returns them to, or prevents their being brought from the plow tail, will be of infinite service to individuals and to government.

4th. It is my opinion, that the produce of these stoppages would in time become an object, that by being fixed and immovable in the funds, would tend to make them more steady by occupying a considerable proportion of them.

5th. It

5th. It would be no trifling piece of state policy to enable the people in some measure to bear the almost intolerable load laid on them by government, by easing them of the intolerable burthen of poor-rates, particularly as it would give them great credit, and cost them nothing.

I shall lastly observe, that the money proposed thus to be taken from this class of the people by stoppages, will on investigation, be found to be only loose idle money, that is of no use to those from whom it is stopped, as among manufacturers, mechanics and labourers, this money goes all to the ale-house, to the acquiring bad habits, and the destruction of health.....and with servants in silk stockings, ruffles, and other appurtenances of dress, highly unbecoming their station, and which only tend to destroy all distinction among the different orders of society.

For

For the practicability of this my plan, I must allow that things often appear easy to a projector, which when weighed in the cool dispassionate scale of reason seem much more difficult; I can only say, that having had this in my thoughts some years, I have compared the theory with such practice as I have had in parish business, and have never yet seen any objections to it that diligence and perseverance in so good a cause might not easily overcome. This I assert, that no intentional reform will have any effect in this country, until some measure is adopted that may tend to restore the morals of the lower orders of the people, which are at present so corrupt as to give us cause to expect things to grow daily worse, rather than better; and if this system should be thought any way likely to conduce thereunto, it will give me great pleasure to lend my assistance, either to alter or amend this, or

E

help

help to form any other, to as to be pro-
ductive of this very desirable end.

I have underneath given a sketch for printed di-
rections for making the matter of the stop-
pages easy to the meanest capacity; only ob-
serve that the column for stoppages on ac-
count of bastardy is blank, when the servant
is charged with any weekly allowance for
the support of one or more, it will be deduct-
ed, and brought to account in that column.

Servants Name	Parish where Belonging	Description	Yearly Wages	Poor Rate Stop. per l.	Stop for Bastar- dy	Total Amt.
			l. s. d.	s. d.	l. s. d.	l. s. d.
John Jenkins	St. James's	Single man	16 16 0	4 0	0 0 0	3 7 2
Rich. Hill	Edmonton	Married, no child	10 0 0	3 0	0 0 0	2 8 0
Jos. Thomas	Edmonton	Married, 1 child	14 0 0	1 0	0 0 0	6 14 0
Char. Jones	St. Andrews	Married, 3 child.	14 0 0	0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0
Sar. Stocking	St. Ann's	Single woman	8 0 0	1 0	0 0 0	0 16 0
Reb. James	St. Marg.	Married, no child	6 0 0	3 0	0 0 0	0 6 0

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Total
Amt.

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2	8	0	
6	14	0	
0	0	0	
0	16	0	
0	6	0	